

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU AND THE PLANNING COMMISSION

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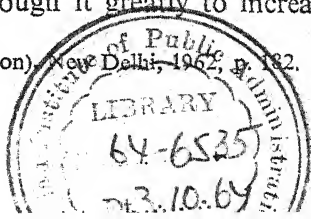
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU AND THE PLANNING COMMISSION

The Foundations

Pandit Nehru had taken an interest in the problems of *Kisans* from 1920 onwards and he had increasingly begun to question the essentially upper-class approach to the country's problems of the groups that dominated the Indian political scene. But his ideas regarding the proper economic and social objectives for India seem to have crystallized during his visit to Europe in 1926-27. He then began to emphasize that political independence was only a step towards the attainment of "social freedom" and also to speak about the importance of socialism.¹ In 1929, the All India Congress Committee passed a resolution at his instance stating that "in order to remove the poverty and misery of the Indian people and to ameliorate the condition of the masses, it is essential to make revolutionary changes in the present economic and social structure of society and to remove inequalities". Further in March, 1931, the Congress at its Karachi Session passed a resolution in which a statement was made to the effect that "the State shall own or control key industries and services, mineral resources, railways, waterways, shipping and other means of transport". This resolution which he drafted in consultation with Gandhiji, he described as "a step, a very short step, in a socialist direction".² His ideas about economic progress then began to develop on definite lines. The Khadi Movement with all its advantages seemed to him to be "a transitional affair". He was ready to support "khadi" because it had economic, political as well as social value under the conditions then existing in India. "It fits in with the present peasant structure," he pointed out, "brings them some relief and makes them self-reliant. It helps to bring us into touch with the peasant masses and to organise them to some extent. It is an effective political weapon in that it helps in the boycott of foreign cloth, and at the same time it acts as some check on the Indian mills, preventing them raising their prices too much... There can be no doubt that khaddar has justified itself in some ways." But he was quite certain that it was an out-of-date form of production and that it would not be possible through it greatly to increase the

¹ J. Nehru, *An Autobiography* (Indian Edition), New Delhi, 1962, p. 182.

² *Ibid.*, p. 266.



wealth of the country or to raise the standard of living of the masses. He believed in industrialization and the big machine because it seemed to him that only through the application of science to industry, resulting in large scale industrialization, could it be possible to increase the wealth of India and the standard of living of the Indian people.³ "Village industries without being tacked on to some modern industrial technique can never provide the essential material and cultural goods that we need today and they cannot compete with the machine", he pointed out. "Can we wind up the basic industries, such as iron and steel, or even the lighter ones that already exist?", he asked. "It is obvious that we cannot do so. If we have railways, bridges, transport facilities, etc., we must either produce them ourselves or depend on others. If we want to have the means of defence we must not only have the basic industries but a highly developed industrial system . . . One basic industry demands another for its support and as a complement to it, and finally we have the machine building industry itself".⁴

At this time he also began to emphasize the ideological question of capitalism vs. socialism. "We cannot escape having to answer the question, now or later", he said, "for the freedom of which class or classes in India are we especially striving for? Do we place the masses, the peasantry and workers, first, or some other small class at the head of our list? Let us give the benefits of freedom to as many groups and classes as possible, but essentially who do we stand for, and when a conflict arises whose side must we take?"⁵ His answer was quite clear. As he put it in his Presidential Address at the Lucknow Session of the Congress in 1936, "I am convinced that the only key to the solution of the world's problems and of India's problems lies in socialism, and when I use this word I do so not in a vague humanitarian way but in the scientific, economic sense . . . I see no way of ending the poverty, the vast unemployment, the degradation and the subjection of the Indian people except through socialism".

The Soviet example impressed him considerably and he mentioned his admiration for the Soviet experiment in a number of speeches and writings of that period. "I do not approve of many things that have taken place in Russia", he wrote in 1933, "nor am I a Communist in the accepted sense of the word. But taking everything together, I have been greatly impressed by the Russian experiment".⁶ He specially mentioned his admiration for the achievements of the U.S.S.R. in the

³ See the extract quoted in Nehru on Socialism, Selected Speeches and Writings, New Delhi, 1964, pp. 38-39.

⁴ Nehru, *op. cit.*, pp. 524-526.

⁵ Nehru on Socialism, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

Lucknow Address though he was aware that many of these had been achieved "at terrible cost".

The First Effort

The National Planning Committee of the Congress was set up in 1938 and Pandit Nehru was appointed its Chairman. This might be said to be the starting point of his personal involvement in the planning process in India. The work "fascinated" him.⁷ "As we proceeded with this work", he wrote later, "it grew and grew, till it embraced almost every phase of national activity."⁸ It appears that in the midst of his political activities, he gave a great deal of time to the work of this Committee,⁹ though he realized that the Committee could only produce an outline which would have to be filled in later and that the scheme could be given effect to only in a free India.

In the notes prepared for this Committee he took certain positions which were to continue to guide his basic approach to planning in India. He emphasized the importance of large scale industries and said, "There can be no planning if such planning does not include big industries". But when a controversy arose about the respective role and importance of large and small scale industries, he took the view that there was no essential conflict between the two. "I feel...that it is inevitable and desirable to encourage the use and development of the big machine and thus to industrialize India", he wrote in this connection. "I am convinced at the same time that no amount of industrialization in this way will do away with the necessity of developing cottage industries on a large scale in India and this not merely as feeders but as independent units. I do not know what science may achieve in the course of the next generation or two but as far as I can see cottage industries will be essential to India in addition to large scale industries The problem therefore becomes one of co-ordination between the two. It is a question of planning by the State".¹⁰

In Pandit Nehru's view, the representation of many view points on the Committee was not in any sense undesirable. "A discussion of these different approaches and points of disagreement will be helpful to us as well as later on, to the public at large. This in itself has importance as the ultimate policy of the State will necessarily depend on public opinion, and the more informed this public opinion is the

⁷ Pandit Nehru's enthusiasm for this work was not very much shared by his colleagues. Mahatma Gandhi even wrote to him, "It has appeared to me that much money and labour are being wasted on an effort which will bring forth little or no fruit". See J. Nehru : *A Bunch of Old Letters*, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1958, p. 379.

⁸ J. Nehru : *An Autobiography*, *op. cit.*, p. 607.

⁹ See P. C. Mahalanobis: *Talks on Planning*, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, and Calcutta, Statistical Publishing Society, 1961, p. 2.

¹⁰ J. Nehru : *A Bunch of Old Letters*, *op. cit.*, pp. 382-83.

better it will be for us.”¹¹ This approach of his perhaps explains the composition of the Commission as he built it up after 1950.

Setting up the Commission

Pandit Nehru's interest in the idea of national planning continued in spite of interruptions in the work of the Committee due to his imprisonment, and one of his first acts on joining the Interim Government in September, 1946, as its Vice-Chairman, was to appoint an Advisory Planning Board. He was eager to get on with the task of planning and, therefore, the Board was given only three months to report as to the machinery of planning that should be set up. Though the Board presented its report within the time stipulated, various political and other difficulties came in the way of implementing those recommendations at that time and the idea of setting up a Planning Commission had to be postponed. He tried to make a beginning by setting up an Economic Unit as well as a Statistical Unit attached to the Cabinet Secretariat. But nothing definite could be done in regard to the formulation of concrete plans. “We were caught up in the rapidly flowing current of events”, Pandit Nehru later mentioned, “and had to face one difficulty after another. I feel rather strongly now that we made a mistake in not thinking in terms of organised planning earlier.”

In the meanwhile he was giving a lead in the direction of building up a climate of opinion in favour of planning. The Economic Programme Committee of the Congress which worked in 1947-48 under his Chairmanship made a recommendation in favour of setting up a permanent Planning Commission. In the second half of 1949, he got an American expert, Dr. Solomon Trone, who had considerable experience of development work in various countries including the U.S.S.R., Japan and China, to study certain aspects of the Indian economy and make recommendations. Dr. Trone in his report seems to have come out clearly in favour of creating a strong planning authority in the country. He recommended the establishment of a Planning Commission which would be an autonomous body, responsible directly to take effective action in regard to the preparation and execution of the plan. Dr. Trone also emphasized the need to create capital goods industries and, in particular, additional steel plants, a machine-tool industry and a heavy electricals industry.

Dr. Trone's recommendations did not receive much support in the official circles of the Government. They were described by a special sub-committee of senior civil servants as being “fundamentally totalitarian” and for that reason largely inapplicable in a democratic India.

¹¹ Quoted in P. C. Mahalanobis, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

A proposal was put forward in favour of a recommendation made earlier by Shri Gopalaswamy Ayyanger that a Council of Economic Administration consisting of the Secretaries to Government dealing with economic matters should be set up. Only if it was felt that the public would have greater confidence in the plan if it was known to have originated with an outside planning body, wholly or largely non-official, was it suggested that a Planning Commission may be set up.

Pandit Nehru's mind had obviously been already made up regarding the appointment of a Planning Commission. "Our failure is not due to any lack of effort," he wrote in December, 1949, "but rather to a lack of appreciation of a particular situation and lack of data to judge it. All this points to the urgent necessity of organised planning...." The Congress Working Committee passed a resolution early in January, 1950, recommending the setting up of a Planning Commission.

There was opposition in the Cabinet to the setting up of a Planning Commission from no less a person than the Finance Minister, Dr. John Mathai. But Nehru took the position that in this matter he was bound to carry out the policy enunciated by the Congress Working Committee. This in a way was an ingenuous reply because the main supporter of this line of approach in the Congress had always been Pandit Nehru himself.

Pandit Nehru took a great deal of interest in the setting up of the Commission. When the draft of the resolution setting out the terms of reference of the Commission was being considered, he re-wrote a considerable part of the draft and in particular he linked up the work of the Planning Commission directly to the Fundamental Rights and the Directive Principles enunciated in the Constitution. This kind of special interest in a document defining the basic approach and objectives of the Commission was characteristic of Pandit Nehru. He always wanted to make sure that these were well-defined and well-understood. When the National Development Council was discussing the Draft Outline of the Third Plan in September, 1960, he emphasized the importance of remembering "what our objectives were and not to lose ourselves in the forest of details that a Plan had to deal with. Because, always when one considered the detail, one must look back on the main thing, how far it fitted in with the main issue; otherwise, it was out of place". Even at the time of finalising the Third Five Year Plan he himself worked upon the draft section on "objectives of planned development" before it was finalised.¹²

¹² See Tarlok Singh: "Jawaharlal Nehru and the Five Year Plans", *Yojana*, June 7, 1964, pp. 5-9.

The Chairman

Pandit Nehru at one stage seems to have thought of keeping out of the Commission when it was established in 1950, but, according to Prof. Mahalanobis, "he was persuaded to become its Chairman".¹³ He was of course interested in its deliberations especially on important problems and he many times expressed a wish that he could attend its meetings more regularly than he actually did. But in spite of his keen interest, he found it difficult regularly to attend meetings of the Commission. Even in the earlier years he could not attend very frequently and later on his attendance became more and more infrequent. "My own connection with the Planning Commission has been intimate", he said, when introducing the First Five Year Plan in the Lok Sabha, "but the work has been carried out in the main by others." In the recent debate on the Mid-term Appraisal of the Third Plan, he again mentioned, "Frankly, I am invited once in two months to attend some policy meeting....I cannot, and it is beyond my capacity to, deal with day to day problems". This, however, was in a way useful because he could look with a certain degree of detachment at the work of the Commission and concentrate such attention as he could provide on strategic issues. This task suited his temperament and it was in providing leadership and guidance on strategic issues that his Chairmanship came to be of great value in the working of the Planning Commission. Moreover, he made it a point to attend the meetings when the Commission was dealing with major issues and his attendance was more frequent when the Five Year Plans were being formulated. Even in the last meeting of the Commission that he attended on May 10, 1964, when certain basic issues relating to the approach to the Fourth Plan were being considered, he had observed that he would be glad to give as much time for this work as was required because he was deeply interested in it. His participation and guidance were essential in such crucial deliberations because no one else could take the responsibility for such decisions. Especially when the decisions were of crucial importance, involved a significant departure from the past policy or there were major differences of opinion, without his intervention and lead it was difficult for the Commission to proceed.

Pandit Nehru did not take much interest in the detailed working of the Commission or in its organization. Of course the appointment of Members including that of the Deputy Chairman was entirely his responsibility and it may be inferred that while he consulted the Deputy Chairman in the matter, some of the key appointments owe their origin directly to his initiative. It is difficult to say what his approach regarding the composition of the Commission was, because no very definite

¹³ P. C. Mahalanobis, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

pattern is discernible in the appointments that he made. As indicated by his approach to the composition of the National Planning Committee, to which a reference has been made earlier, he probably wanted to make it a balanced body in the sense of having different types of background and experience represented on it. He was also probably more interested in the social, political and economic outlook of the persons to be appointed as Members than in their expertise. He however considered it necessary to associate a senior scientist or technologist with the working of the Commission. Thus in 1955 he decided that Prof. Mahalanobis should be treated as a *de facto* Member and also appointed Dr. J. C. Ghosh as a Member. Since then, a senior scientist has always been a Member of the Commission.

Since 1952, when Shri Pitambar Pant was appointed as Private Secretary to the Chairman, Pandit Nehru had a direct channel of communication for keeping himself informed of the main developments in the work and thinking of the Commission. He left organizational matters to the Deputy Chairman and the senior officers of the Commission. He, however, had a certain distinctive approach regarding the kind of staff that should be appointed in the Commission. For example, when the question came up of selecting a suitable person to be in charge of one of the key programmes in the First Five Year Plan, and a suggestion was made of having a Committee of senior officers to guide the programme, he wrote, "I am anxious that this scheme should not be dealt with in the normal routine of official procedure. Of course, care should be taken that there is full scrutiny, but official work means delayed work and it is of the utmost importance that we should go ahead with these schemes with speed and efficiency. The idea of making a committee of various Secretaries and Joint Secretaries does not appeal to me though, no doubt, some of our important Ministries will have to be associated with the work. I am not interested very much in the status of people in it, but with their driving power and enthusiasm for the project". At one stage when the appointment of a separate Secretary for the Commission was under consideration, he wrote, "Such Secretary, however, should be I think a person particularly interested in planning and, if possible, with some experience which might be useful in that work. I do not think that we should appoint a Secretary merely by some method of rotation as is normally done in the appointment of Secretaries. Indeed if we find a suitable man outside the services I would not hesitate to appoint him".

Pandit Nehru realized that it would take time for the Commission to be effective. "We should not expect any wonderful results to follow immediately from planning", he wrote in December, 1949. "The

machinery has to be built up and has to gather experience and, through trial and error, to learn how to act efficiently." He was not quite happy about "the bureaucratic tendencies" that developed in the Commission's organization. "The Planning Commission", he is reported to have remarked in October, 1963, "which was established as a small body of serious thinkers had turned into a Government Department, complete with a crowd of Secretaries, Directors, and, of course, a big building".¹⁴ But while he disliked the fact that the Planning Commission had become more and more a government type organization and followed protracted governmental routines,¹⁵ he was very sensitive to any criticism of the basic work done by the Commission. In the Parliamentary debate on the Mid-Term Appraisal of the Third Five Year Plan, he said, "I am full of admiration for the work the Planning Commission has done...In the last 12 years, the Planning Commission...has performed an essential task: without it we could not have progressed".¹⁶

He laid special emphasis on the key role performed by the Commission in ensuring integrated planning under a federal structure. "If it had not been there, the Central Government could not have done their job because immediately difficulties would have arisen that the Central Government was encroaching on the rights of States." He was very conscious about the necessity of carrying the States with him in the planning process, and he made it a point to attend every meeting of the National Development Council, took considerable interest in its deliberations and emphasized the fact that the participants represented India as a whole in carrying out this planning function.

The Basic Strategy

He commended the First Five Year Plan to Parliament and in doing so paid a tribute to the staff of the Commission. The very fact that it was "the first attempt of its kind to bring the whole picture of India—agricultural, industrial, social and economic—into one framework of thinking" was to him a "tremendous achievement". Our plan has challenged us to think in terms of the good of the nation as a whole apart from the separate problems which we have to face in respect of our villages, districts or provinces", he said. Therefore, the mere act of framing this plan and of having produced this report is something for which we can congratulate ourselves." But, while saying all this, he was aware of the limitations from which the First

¹⁴ *The Statesman*, Delhi, October 8, 1963.

¹⁵ Prime Minister's Press Conference, October 9, 1963.

¹⁶ Lok Sabha Debates, Part II (Wednesday, 11th December, 1963).

Plan suffered. He mentioned that the Commission had started formulating this plan with certain inherent limitations; the country's resources were tied up with certain undertakings already in an advanced stage of execution. It had, therefore, to plan with the balance of the resources left and to make the best of the bargain. He, therefore, pointed out that the First Plan was essentially a preparatory plan and that the Second Plan would have to be much more effective and far-reaching. He also thought that the country would be in a far better position to work out the Second Plan on the basis of the experience gained in the First Plan period.

Certain lacunae in the First Five Year Plan had come to be noticed by 1953-54, especially in the field of steel, and steps had been taken to give more attention to increase in steel production. But Pandit Nehru specifically gave vent to his feeling that a change in approach and emphasis was necessary in a speech that he made in a meeting of the National Development Council on November 9, 1954. He pointed out that the achievements under the First Plan were "considerable" and "creditable" but that it was necessary to remember that the country was just at the beginning of the problem. "These are the initial stages", he said, "when we have been groping in the direction of planning. That was inevitable because we did not have and we could not have all the information, data, statistics which are essential for planning". In this speech he then came out with certain basic ideas which came to be increasingly important in the strategy of planning. The first of these was his emphasis on a more well-defined objective for planning. "Planning is not putting down just as you want, planning is not merely giving priority to all things which you wish to do. Planning is something wider and deeper... The Planning Commission is of no use at all if it has a static outlook... One must have that dynamic outlook of change, change of every kind—political of course, economic and social." He thought it essential to have a definite picture of where the country was to go. "I do not mean to say it should be a rigid picture; it may be a changing picture as we gather experience, information, etc. Nevertheless we have to plan for something." And then he clearly announced, "The picture I have in mind is definitely and absolutely a Socialistic picture of society. I am not using the word in a dogmatic sense at all, but in the sense of meaning largely that the means of production should be socially owned and controlled for the benefit of society as a whole."

Following this line further he emphasized the importance of developing a machine building industry in India; and for this purpose he emphasized the importance of rapidly increasing the supply of technical personnel. It was in this meeting of the National Development

Council that he first mentioned the necessity of reconsidering the Industrial Policy of Government as it was laid down in 1948 and of further emphasizing the importance of public sector industries. At the same time, he did not minimize the importance of agriculture and small-scale and cottage industries in relation to development planning. In his speech at the Avadi Session of the Congress in 1955, he emphasized the importance of balanced development of heavy industry, light industry, village industry and cottage industry. In November, 1958, he specially impressed upon the National Development Council the importance of small-scale and cottage industries: "It was necessary to develop cottage industries to provide employment and explore possibilities of creative effort...The small industries would also help in spreading a spirit of technology among a large number of people."

During the last stages of the preparation of the Second Five Year Plan, he emphasized the importance of agriculture which he found was not receiving adequate attention. With the increasing difficulties on the food front, he began to lay increasing stress on structural changes like ceilings on holdings and encouragement of co-operative farming. The primary purpose of Community Development, he emphasized, was to increase agricultural production. In the last meeting of the National Development Council that he attended in November, 1963, he expressed his concern at the relatively slow progress recorded in the agricultural sector, and cautioned that the country could ill afford any slackness or inefficiency in this field. While industry was important in terms of a long-term perspective, greater emphasis had to be laid for the present on agricultural production as it affected per capita income more directly. Land reforms, being a prerequisite of agricultural progress, had received immediate attention after Independence but, due to pressures and other difficulties, the land reforms programme had not been fully implemented. He also said that the setting up of big industrial plants by themselves would not solve the country's problems and gave the example of Punjab which, because of superior agriculture and small industries, had a higher per capita income than States which had big industrial plants but inferior agriculture.

Perspective Planning

At the time of introducing the First Five Year Plan, while he was aware of the fact that the First Plan was only a beginning, he was not quite sure about the long-term perspective. "You and I cannot lay down what will happen," he had said when introducing the First Plan in the Lok Sabha, "or what the next generation will do. You and I

cannot even say what the next generation will be like...We cannot bind the future, but for the present, we have to deal with facts as they are". Of course, he was aware of the necessity of dynamic and fundamental changes necessary in India. But it was only after 1954 that he began to refer to the importance of long-term planning in definite terms. "Long-term planning does not mean planning in terms of five years only, but planning for fifteen years and twenty years ahead, keeping in view the broad picture of the social structure we want to attain twenty years hence", he pointed out in the National Development Council in January, 1956. "It is only by keeping this broad picture in view that our current planning can fit into the structure. Otherwise we would be lost in current planning, and plan in a wrong direction."

"Planning was a stage by stage enlargement of resources so that one step led to another and what was required was some kind of approach and thinking on their objectives and the direction in which they were going and not so much consideration of one scheme or another", he again emphasised in November, 1958. "The First Plan was not, practically speaking, a plan at all. The Second Plan marked the beginning of planning but the details and the available data for planning were not adequate. They had now to pull themselves out from the maze of the schemes and think afresh as to where they were and what they could do because there was a certain danger in being overwhelmed by events and by multiplicity of detail."

When thinking on the Third Plan was at its penultimate stage, he again emphasized (March, 1960): "When the Second Five Year Plan was drawn up there was a good deal in it about the perspective for the future....Anyhow, the idea then was that we should prepare for the Third Plan and get ready for further advance along certain lines. Similarly, now that we are considering the Third Plan, we had really to keep in mind the Fourth and possibly the Fifth Plan."

In the controversy that developed at the time of formulating the Second Five Year Plan regarding "physical" vs. "financial" planning, he supported the former approach. This did not mean neglecting the financial side. But he emphasized that the latter approach was not adequate for rapid and planned progress. He supported the organization of the Perspective Planning Division in the Commission and took keen interest in the work that it was doing. The Chief of this Division was also his Private Secretary as Chairman of the Commission and this helped Pandit Nehru to keep in close touch with the studies made in the Division.

His deep feeling of patriotism and confidence in his own country and people led him to emphasise that while we should and actually

were trying to learn whatever other countries and experts had to teach us, we were developing according to our own genius. In January, 1956, he referred to the arguments in the press regarding the so-called tussle between the various methods of planning. "Some people had charged the Government for coming under the influence of Communist planning, while others had charged them with coming under the influence of somebody else", he mentioned. "The real point was that an attempt was being made to evolve an approach consistent with India's own thinking, while profiting by other peoples' thinking and experience." When the Second Plan came up against certain difficulties and criticism began to be made, especially in some foreign countries, that Indian planning was tending to be over-ambitious, he pointed out in a meeting of the National Development Council in November, 1958, that while the country should be grateful for foreign assistance and advice, they would follow their own advice whatever the consequences. "While they would profit by the advice of those who knew more, they had their own views as to how the country should grow and they would adopt that course."

From the very beginning, this effort of planning appealed to him—"the mighty theme of a nation building itself, remaking itself, and of all of us working together to make a new India." While he could see the difficulties in the way and the many unfulfilled tasks, he did not like anyone to emphasize only this negative aspect. "Looking at the past there was a feeling of disappointment at the rate of progress", he said in September, 1960. He hoped we would always be discontented with the rate of progress because we wanted to go faster. But really he did not see any reason whatever for this feeling of disappointment. "What we had done... was by almost any standard exceedingly creditable and sometimes quite remarkable." It was necessary to keep that in view. Of course it was only proper that "we should always aim high".

Democracy and Planning

There was no doubt in his mind that the democratic way of planning was the only one that could work in India. "It is clear", he said in 1950 when introducing the First Plan in Parliament, "that so far as this country is concerned, we cannot attain this ideal (of economic democracy) by conflict or violence... India is not only a big country, but also a varied country, and if anyone takes to the sword, he will inevitably be met by the sword of someone else... and all the limited energies of the nation required for better ends will be destroyed in the process." He was quite emphatic that everything that came in the way of attaining the objective of economic democracy—

or socialism—must be removed, but “removed in a co-operative way; removed by State pressure; removed by law”. “It is sometimes said that rapid progress cannot take place by peaceful and democratic methods and that authoritarian and coercive methods have to be adopted”, he said in 1959. “I do not accept this proposition. Indeed, in India today any attempt to discard democratic methods would lead to disruption and would thus put an end to any immediate prospect of progress.”¹⁷

In his view, one merit of the democratic process of planning was that the people would support additional effort and sacrifice if they were made partners in the whole process. “If people thoroughly understood the plan and so the direction in which it would take them and the results it was likely to achieve, they would put a larger measure of effort”, he pointed out in May, 1955. “It was therefore essential that the people should join them in their thinking about the plan. If the Government or the Planning Commission brought out the plan themselves and placed it before the public, the latter might not understand many things and might not accept some of them. On the other hand, when they are associated with the thinking of the plan they appreciate the difficulties and know that if they want something worthwhile they have to pay for it by hard work. In that way it became easier to tackle the question of resources.” His belief in the democratic and peaceful method arose from his enormous faith in the Indian people. He felt that “if anything is put to them straight, honestly and in a way they are able to understand and if they are taken into confidence they can be made to do anything”.

He emphasised that Indian planning had to be directed to the attainment of socialism because that was the only way in which it could arouse peoples’ participation and willing support. “The mighty task that we have undertaken demands the fullest co-operation from the masses of our people”, he pointed out in 1959. “That co-operation cannot come unless we put forward an objective which is acceptable to them and which promises them results. The change we seek necessitates burdens on our people, even those who can least bear them; unless they realise that they are partners in the building up of a society which will bring them benefits, they will not accept these burdens or give their full co-operation. What is called “free enterprise” will never appeal to the masses of our people; it will lead to the use of resources often for purposes that are not of primary importance.”¹⁸

Because of his belief in democratic planning, he also took considerable interest in ensuring the participation of Members of

¹⁷ Nehru on Socialism, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 119-20.

Parliament in the thinking on the Plan. The best effort that he made in that direction was at the time of the formulation of the Third Five Year Plan in 1959-60 when he constituted an Informal Committee of Members of Parliament from various parties for discussing certain basic issues relating to the Plan. He himself presided over the deliberations of this Committee and took pains to ensure that not only the Congress Party but other political groups represented in Parliament also felt a sense of involvement in the Plan that would be formulated. He never thought that consultation with Parliament was a formality. He himself introduced all the three Five Year Plans in Parliament and was ready to welcome criticism on the assumption that it would help to improve the nature of planning.

His basic democratic instinct also led him to pursue methods of persuasion and the creation of a suitable climate of public opinion when he wanted certain new approaches and policies to be adopted. For example, it is apparent that he was not quite satisfied with the manner and the approach of the Commission regarding the formulation of the Second Five Year Plan in the earlier stages. He, therefore, together with Shri C. D. Deshmukh, then Finance Minister, encouraged the work that Prof. Mahalanobis wanted to develop in the Indian Statistical Institute and later inaugurated the joint studies by the Planning Commission, the Finance Ministry and the Indian Statistical Institute which led to the formulation of the "Draft Plan-frame". But even though he was greatly attracted to the scheme of development outlined in the "Draft Plan-frame", he only commended it for consideration as indicating a certain approach to future development. "A 'plan-frame' did not mean exactly a draft of a Plan", he said; "it was a draft of a draft. ... the figures given in the papers on the 'plan-frame' were necessarily subject to revision. 'The plan-frame' indicated a certain way of approach, a certain logical way of considering basic questions, regardless of the actual figures." Though it is true that the fundamental change of outlook in the Second Plan could take place only because of his lead, he did not attempt to force his views on his colleagues. Even when he was quite convinced that a certain approach or policy was correct, he would only recommend it for consideration and examination. In the meanwhile through his public speeches and in other ways he would create a climate of public opinion in favour of such ideas. His public speeches not only helped to educate the public but also created an atmosphere in which the policies that he wanted to support began to obtain increasing acceptance. Prof. Mahalanobis has pointed out that Pandit Nehru was "extremely reluctant to use his personal influence in any way. Persuasion must be achieved through the right way of thinking and not

by personal pressure.”¹⁹ His faith in persuasion obviously stemmed from his sense of democracy. This sense of democracy was also responsible for the many compromises that he accepted. To some extent, the compromises could also be ascribed to his lack of interest in administrative details especially of organising the implementation of a programme.

The “Architect” of Indian Planning

Pandit Nehru had a deep appreciation of modern science and technology and was quite convinced in his own mind that an increasing application of these was essential if India's difficult problems had to be solved. With his faith in India and her future, he also wanted to ensure that India did not fall behind in scientific and technological advance. Hence his support for the development of science, the growth of basic industries and the use of up-to-date modern technology. While supporting the Atomic Energy Programme, he once pointed out that while the economic and other reasons mentioned in favour of the programme were good, even if no such reasons existed “the country would have to go ahead with such an atomic power programme, since atomic energy was the thing of the future, and India could not afford to fall behind in this new development”.

Whether in the field of politics or economics he was keen on following the path of science. Even in 1933, he had written, “Our policies must either be those of magic or of science. The former of course requires no argument or logic; the latter is in theory at least entirely based on clarity of thought and reasoning...Personally I have no faith in or use for the ways of magic and religion and I can only consider the question on scientific ground.”²⁰ Again, in 1959, he emphasised the fact that it was the growth of science and technology which was moulding social and economic structures. Therefore, the increasing acceptance of modern science and technology were of great importance to backward and underdeveloped countries.²¹ He not only believed in these ideas but he was one of the main intellectual forces in modern India which attempted to break through the revivalist and irrationalist traditions and encouraged modernisation, rationality and a scientific outlook. He was, therefore, always appreciative of ideas and programmes based on scientific outlook and method and was ready to do his best to support them. His support was of great importance because he was not only the Prime Minister and the Chairman of the Planning Commission, but he was also the *de facto* leader of the Congress Party and, what was even more

¹⁹ P. C. Mahalanobis, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

²⁰ Nehru on Socialism, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 115-16.

important, an outstanding national figure who was capable of communicating his ideas on the real problems facing the country to the vast masses of the people. Some of the key developments towards democratisation and modernisation that have taken place in the period since Independence owe a great deal to his advocacy and support. The idea of Community Development for example appealed to him because, as he pointed out, it was something which was basically revolutionary. The acceptance of the metric system and the rapid implementation of the changeover were very much due to his support. The development of basic industries especially in the field of steel, machine-building and oil would have been difficult without strong personal support from him.

Amidst all the vicissitudes and complex problems that faced India since 1950, Pandit Nehru held steadfast to his approach that planned social and economic transformation based on democracy was the most important thing for India's future. After the Chinese aggression in 1962, when there was confusion even in high policy-making circles and people in important positions began to think that planning may have to be wound up for some time, he stood firmly by the Plan. He took the position that while some adjustments may have to be made in the light of changing events, "the Plan should be looked upon as an essential part of the national effort". The Plan was the warp and woof of our national life and it was the war effort itself that required the Plan. As Shri Tarlok Singh puts it, "The support which Shri Nehru gave at this stage and in the succeeding months made it possible not only to continue the Plan, but also to enlarge its scope in a number of vital directions".²²

Pandit Nehru was, together with persons like Shri M. Visvesvaraya and Shri Subhas Bose, initially responsible for creating an awareness in India of the necessity of national economic planning. As the Chairman of the Congress National Planning Committee he was the first to guide organised effort in the direction of planning. As the Prime Minister he was responsible for setting up the Planning Commission. From the time he became the Chairman of the Planning Commission at its inception to his death, Pandit Nehru's stewardship of the Commission helped to guide Indian planning in a definite direction and his participation and support were of great value to it in fulfilling its functions. He has therefore been aptly described by the present Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission as "the architect of democratic planning in India".

²² Tarlok Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 9.